

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /010 R

66011

DRAFTED BY EA/TB:RASMITH

APPROVED BY EA/WHGLEESTEEN

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO WHITE HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS AGENCY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 080224

PASS TO VP AIRCRAFT NO. 86970 FOR DEP ASST SECY MILLER

FOLLOWING REPEAT BANGKOK 8086 ACTION SECSTATE INFO SECDEF

JCS DIRNSA CINCPAC 1 APR 76

QUOTE

CONFIDENTIAL BANGKOK 8086

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PFOR, TH, US

SUBJECT: IMPLICATIONS OF THAI ELECTIONS FOR WITHDRAWAL OF U.S.
FORCES

1. THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT'S DECISION CALLING FOR THE
WITHDRAWAL FROM THAILAND OF U.S. FORCES (EXCEPT JUSMAG, DAO
AND MARINE GUARD) IS COMING IN FOR HEAVY CRITICISM, MOST OF IT
IN THE FORM OF BITTER (AND OFTEN SELF-SERVING) COMMENTS BY THAI
MILITARY. TO A DEGREE, SOME OF THIS CRITICISM IS DIRECTED
MORE AT THE PROCEDURES FOLLOWED BY THE RTG THAN AT THE SUBSTANCE
OF THE AFFAIR. THESE IS PARTICULAR RESENTMENT THAT THE NATIONAL
SECURITY COUNCIL WAS NOT CONSULTED BEFORE THE FINAL POSITION
WAS ANNOUNCED.

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2. OTHER CRITICS HAVE ALSO APPEARED. THANAT KHOMAN BLASTED THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN AN ARTICLE IN THE BANGKOK POST AND MOST RECENTLY, THE THAI-LANGUAGE "DAILY NEWS" INVEIGHED IN AN EDITORIAL AGAINST THE DECISION ITSELF AND AGAINST THE CARETAKER KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT FOR HAVING PRE-EMPTED A DECISION THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN LEFT FOR THE GOVERNMENT THAT WILL BE FORMED AFTER THE APR 4 ELECTIONS. WHEN QUESTIONED BY THE PRESS, FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI AND UNDER SECRETARY ANAN AS WELL AS SHUKRIT HIMSELF HAVE CONCEDED THAT THE NEXT GOVERNMENT WILL BE FREE TO PURSUE ITS OWN POLICIES AND TO RE-EXAMINE THE ACTIONS OF ITS PREDECESSOR IF IT WISHES TO DO SO.

3. THESE EVENTS MIGHT CREATE THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE COULD, AFTER THE FORMATION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT, BE A SERIOUS RE-EXAMINATION AND POSSIBLE REVERSAL OF THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT'S POLICY DECISION ON U.S. FORCES. THE EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS IS LIKELY TO BE THE CASE. IT SEEMS PROBABLE THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL PROMINENTLY FEATURE AT LEAST SOME OF THE PARTIES THAT, AS MEMBERS OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT, WERE ASSOCIATED IN THE RTG'S DECISION ON WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. FORCES. GIVEN ALSO THE SUPER-PATRIOTIC TONE OF THE RTG'S PRESENTATION OF THE ISSUES, AND THE NOTEWORTHY LACK OF PUBLIC DEBATE OR OPPOSITION FROM ANY QUARTER TO THE RTG'S STANCE WHILE THE NEGOTIATIONS WERE IN PROCESS, A REVERSAL BY THE NEXT GOVERNMENT SEEMS HIGHLY IMPROBABLE.

4. IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THAT A NEW RTG DID DECIDE TO REOPEN NEGOTIATIONS ON A U.S. RESIDUAL PRESENCE, MOREOVER, THIS WOULD PROBABLY RESULT IN A RAPID POLARIZATION OF THE THAI POLITICAL SCENE, WITH SUPPORTERS OF THE OUTGOING GOVERNMENT FORMALLY AND OPENLY OPPOSING ANY CONTINUED U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE. DEMONSTRATIONS BY STUDENTS AND OTHERS, AT THE EMBASSY AND OTHER U.S. INSTALLATIONS, WOULD BE INEVITABLE AND ALMOST CERTAINLY LEAD TO VIOLENCE. THE VIABILITY OF ANY U.S. INSTALLATIONS WHICH MIGHT BE RETAINED IN THAILAND IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD BE EXTREMELY LIMITED, AND THE SECURITY OF SUCH INSTALLATIONS AND THEIR PERSONNEL COULD BECOME A PROBLEM.

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5. IN SHORT, THE EMBASSY DOES NOT EXPECT A REVERSAL OF CURRENT RTG POLICY ON U.S. FORCES WITHDRAWAL TO RESULT FROM THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS, AND THINKS THAT IF SUCH A REVERSAL WERE TO OCCUR, IT WOULD LEAD TO THAI INTERNAL STRIFE OF A KIND THAT WOULD MAKE A U.S. RESIDUAL PRESENCE INADVISABLE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE U.S. ITSELF.

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KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT, POLITICAL STABILITY, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, NATIONAL ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE080224
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: RASMITH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760125-0496
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t197604102/aaaadjlv.tel
Line Count: 117
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <04 OCT 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IMPLICATIONS OF THAI ELECTIONS FOR WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. FORCES
TAGS: MILI, PFOR, PINT, TH, US
To: WHITE HOUSE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006